

Caring for Your Child
The First Few Weeks of Breastfeeding

Why should I breastfeed?

Deciding to breastfeed is a wonderful decision for you and your baby. Breast milk provides complete nutrition for your infant and helps to prevent illness. Babies who do not breastfeed have more ear infections and diarrhea than breastfed babies. Breastfed babies have fewer trips to the pediatrician for common childhood illnesses, have fewer allergies, a lower risk of obesity and diabetes, reduced risk of SIDS, and higher IQ's than formula fed babies.

There are also benefits for the mother who breastfeeds. There is less ovarian and breast cancer and osteoporosis in breastfeeding mothers compared to formula feeding mothers. Breastfeeding helps with postpartum weight loss, delays fertility, increases a mother's self-confidence and promotes bonding. With breast milk, there is no wasted formula and no cost! Breastfeeding is convenient because the milk is always ready and at the right temperature.

Breast milk is different from formula because it changes to meet the nutritional needs of your child as he grows. Breast milk contains all the vitamins and minerals your baby needs and is easy to digest. For all of these reasons the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants be fed only breast milk for the first 6 months of life. Babies do not need water, juice, or formula. At six months you may offer your baby solid foods, but you should continue to breastfeed until your baby is at least a year old. Babies who switch to table food and whole cow's milk when they are a year old will never need infant formula.

How do I get started?

The first few weeks of breastfeeding, the baby needs to breastfeed frequently to establish your milk supply. Most babies will breastfeed at least 8 times in a 24 hour period. Recent research shows that babies usually have 11 breastfeeding sessions per day if you count feedings on each breast separately. The actual number can range from 7 to 19 sessions daily when each breast is counted as a feeding.

The key to successful breastfeeding is the way you position and latch your baby onto the breast. You should hold the baby "tummy to tummy" so that there is no space between your body and the baby. The baby needs to be facing the breast. **Please make sure not to press on the back of the baby's head.** For correct latch-on, your baby needs to open his mouth wide enough to take both the nipple and some of the areola (the dark area behind the nipple) into his mouth. The corners of the baby's mouth should be at a wide angle and both his upper and lower lips should be outside his mouth. Support your breast with your hand during the feeding. Make sure that your fingers are way back behind the areola **and make sure not to press inward on your breast.** This position will help your baby to get the most milk and you will be less likely to have sore nipples.

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Signs of a poor latch:

- Your nipples are sore during the whole feeding, or are cracked or bleeding
- Your nipples are creased or slanted when the baby comes off the breast
- When the baby sucks you hear clicking or smacking sounds
- The baby is coming off the breast repeatedly after only a few sucks
- The baby's cheeks are dimpling in with each suck
- The baby acts hungry all the time after nursing
- The baby has less than 6-8 wet diapers

Do I have enough milk for my baby?

This is probably the greatest concern for all new breastfeeding mothers. After the first few days of life, many infants seem to **breastfeed** more often and may be a little fussy. Many parents think that their baby is not getting enough milk. This is a normal stage of breastfeeding. The infant's demand increases the mother's milk supply. When mothers worry about their milk supply, they sometimes offer bottles of formula. These bottles cause problems in two ways. They fill your baby up, so he won't breastfeed as often. When you breastfeed less often, you will not make as much milk. Bottle-feeding also causes problems with sucking at the breast. The bottle nipple is shaped much differently from your nipple and milk flows faster from the bottle. Babies may become confused when bottles or pacifiers are offered in the early weeks when they are just learning how to breastfeed. Even though you cannot see the amount of breast milk that goes into your baby, there are other ways, to know if they are getting enough.

Your baby is getting enough if he:

- Breastfeeds at least 8 times in a 24-hour period
- Breastfeeds for 10 minutes or more in a rhythmic suck/swallow/pause/suck pattern
- Is satisfied and not displaying feeding cues (rooting, sucking on fingers) after a feed
- Has 1 wet diaper on the first day of life, three on days 2-3 with more wet diapers on days 4-5. By day 6 your baby should have at least 6-8 wet diapers a day.
- Is stooling soft, yellow, seedy stools by day 5. If your baby is not passing any stools, call your pediatrician.
- Is gaining weight. Your baby should be weighed during the first week of life. Breastfed babies should stop losing weight around day 4-5 when your milk comes in. They usually return to birth weight by 2 weeks of age. Normal weight gain after the second week is about 1 oz. per day.

Once your milk comes in, your breasts will feel softer after a feeding. This tells you that you baby is getting enough milk. Offering your baby a supplemental feeding after nursing to "see if they are still hungry" is not a reliable way to tell if they had enough. Many babies will still take a bottle even if they have had enough from the breast.

How often should I feed my baby?

- Baby's stomach is small and breast milk is easily digested so it will leave the stomach in 1-2 hours. This means you should feed your baby often in the first few weeks but eventually the time between feedings may be longer.
- Always feed your baby when he is showing signs of hunger, even if the baby just ate an hour ago.
- Your baby is doing well if he **feeds a total of 7 to 19 times a day when counting each breast as a separate feeding.**

How long should a feeding last?

Your baby should nurse long enough to get a good flow of milk and to be full. In the beginning of the feeding, the milk is more watery. This satisfies the baby's thirst. As nursing continues, the amount of fat increases. The high fat milk at the end of the feeding is called hind milk. Allow your baby to nurse for as long as he wants (at least 15 minutes) on the first breast so the baby empties the breast and receives the hind milk. When your baby has had enough he will let go of the breast and seem satisfied. Try burping or changing your baby's diaper and then offer the second breast. If your baby is still hungry, he will continue to feed on the second breast. Make sure to alternate the side you start with because the baby's suck is always stronger at the beginning of the feeding.

Growth Spurts

At around 2 weeks, 6 weeks and 3 months, your baby may have a growth spurt. He will want to **breastfeed** every 1 to 1 1/2 hours for a day or two. Remember this is your baby's way of increasing your milk supply. Allow your baby to **breastfeed** as often as he wants during these days and you will make enough milk in a day or two.

Breastfeeding can be a rewarding and loving experience for both you and your baby. You can feel proud that you are providing your baby with the start to a healthier life.

Call your pediatrician or obstetrician if:

- You think your baby is not getting enough milk (refer to this section of handout)
- You notice a white coating that does not come off your baby's tongue and cheek
- You notice your baby has a yellow coloring to the skin and in the white part of the eyes
- You have sudden onset of flu-like symptoms, pain in the breast, and a fever

Contact your local nursing mothers group or La Leche League if you experience any of the following:

- Difficulty latching on
- Engorgement
- Sore or cracked nipples
- Flat or inverted nipples
- Sore breasts or lumps in breast without fever

Resources are as follows:

www.medela.com or 1 800-TELL-YOU

By entering your zip code you can find lactation specialists in your area

www.llli.org or 1 800 LALECHE

By entering your zip code you can find a La Leche group in your area

Nursing Mothers Advisory Council www.nursingmoms.net

Call the lactation specialists at CHOP@ 215-590-4442

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